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TAGS: [PREL](#) [IR](#) [QA](#)
SUBJECT: QATARI MFA OFFICIAL'S PERSPECTIVE OF HEIR
APPARENT'S VISIT TO TEHRAN

REF: DOHA 53

Classified By: Ambassador Joseph E. LeBaron, for reasons 1.4 (b, d).

(C) KEY POINTS

-- The only MFA official to accompany the Heir Apparent on his February 3 visit to Tehran told us February 21 that Iran is "pushing" Qatar to increase bilateral visits of business professionals and investors, but Qatar is committed only to studying the Iranian proposals.

-- MFA Director for Asian and African Affairs Zayed Al-Naemi suggested that the Iranians were unhappy that the Heir Apparent, whose visit to Iran had been planned for several months, spent only half a day in the capital and declined Iranian offers of cultural and touristic events of longer duration outside the capital.

-- On Iranian issues writ large, Al-Naemi said Qatar welcomes close and continuing consultations with the U.S. over how to proceed with Iran. Al-Naemi said Qatar has much experience from previous negotiations with Iran from which the U.S. and its allies could benefit.

-- Right now, said Al-Naemi, Iran believes the U.S. has its hands full in Iraq and Afghanistan.

-- The Iranians, predicted the MFA Director, will draw out negotiations over their nuclear activities for as long as possible. Levying additional sanctions against Iran makes sense in this context provided that the sanctions target the elements of regime power and not the Iranian people themselves, he concluded.

(C) COMMENTS

-- Al-Naemi asserted, contrary to what the French Embassy told us (reftel), that Tamim and his delegation did not discuss internal Iranian issues.

-- The MFA Director returned throughout the conversation to his central argument: that Qatar engages Iran differently than it would if the two countries were not neighbors.

End Key Points and Comments.

1. (C) MFA Director for Asian and African Affairs Zayed Al-Naemi told P/E Chief Rice February 21 that the February 3 visit by Heir Apparent Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani to Tehran, which had been planned for several months, should be seen through the prism of Qatar's need of "dealing with Iran as a neighbor." According to Al-Naemi, the only MFA official who accompanied Tamim to Iran, economic issues were the main

thrust of the discussions. There were no direct discussions of Iran's nuclear program, but Al-Naemi said this is because Iran already knows Qatar's position. Qatar has previously told Iran, he said, that the GOQ opposes Iran's uranium enrichment program to the extent that it does not conform to IAEA resolutions.

12. (C) Asked about the nature of the prevailing economic discussions, Al-Naemi reported that Iran is "very interested" in increasing bilateral visits of business professionals and investors. Tehran is "pushing" Qatar in this area. The Heir Apparent, however, committed Qatar only to studying Iran's proposals, and Al-Naemi said Qatar has no plans for now to increase commercial exchanges. He stressed the need to study Iran's proposals carefully given that Iran is under considerable international economic sanctions, and more may be on the way.

13. (C) Al-Naemi said there was some tension with Iranian officials over the amount of time Tamim spent in country. According to Al-Naemi, Iranian officials had invited Tamim to spend 1-2 days in Iran. Most of the original agenda, as suggested by Tehran, would have been devoted to cultural and touristic events, mainly outside the capital. The Heir Apparent, however, declined to spend even a full day in Iran and departed after lunch directly for Paris to meet with President Sarkozy (reftel). This did not go over well with Iranian officials, suggested Al-Naemi.

QATAR'S BROADER VIEW OF IRAN

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14. (C) Turning to Iranian policies in the region, Al-Naemi said Iran feels empowered against the U.S. and its allies because, in Tehran's view, the U.S. has its hands full in Iraq and Afghanistan -- much to the Iranians' delight. Al-Naemi emphasized the need for close and continuing consultations between the U.S. and Qatar (and other Gulf states) in confronting Iran over its nuclear program. Qatar, noted Al-Naemi, has a long history of dealing with Tehran and knows that the Iranians can be very difficult in negotiations.

15. (C) The Iranians, predicted the MFA Director, will draw out negotiations over their nuclear activities for as long as possible. This tactic is already frustrating the U.S. and its allies, he observed.

16. (C) Levying additional sanctions against Iran makes sense, but only if the sanctions target the elements of regime power and not the Iranian people themselves. This is the careful balance that any new sanctions must strike, concluded Al-Naemi.

Lebaron